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How to Improve Anglo-German Relations

By Professor Hans Delbrück

Professor of History in the University of Berlin,
Editor of "Die Preussische Jahrbücher"



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HOW TO IMPROVE ANGLO-GERMAN RELATIONS.

By Professor HANS DELBRÜCK.

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The majority of Germans believe that the strained relations with Britain are due to British jealousy of the enormous increase of German industry and German trade. This increase is, in point of fact, so considerable that in certain branches British production has already been surpassed by German. If Britain were actually planning to attack and defeat Germany on this account, with the idea of gaining for herself the present German export trade with all its advantages, then all hope of bettering the present state of affairs would be destroyed. For it is certain that the progress of German economic life will not be arrested, but that it will, on the contrary, develop more and more. Britain's jealousy would therefore have to go on increasing, until finally the catastrophe was brought about.

But the entire supposition is a false one. In Germany the circle is ever widening of those who recognise that British competitive jealousy, if it exists at all, is far outweighed by the friendship which every merchant has for his customer. Germany is one of the largest consumers of British goods, and the richer Germany grows,

the better customer does she become to Britain. *It is certain that a war between the two nations will never arise from purely economic reasons.*

Exactly the same may be said with regard to the fear of many British people that Germany is preparing an attack on Britain, to make a great raid for the sake of plunder, to impose a huge war indemnity, or to force Britain to cede certain of her colonies. Even assuming that such a plan were in keeping with the German national character, that it were practicable, and that it were to succeed, there is nothing more certain than that Germany would have no benefit from her gains, but would have to pay dearly for them. For a victory over Britain would give Germany the supremacy in Europe. Europe, however, has never yet submitted to such supremacy, and would unite to punish and suppress Germany, just as she did with Louis XIV. and Napoleon I.

Neither Britain nor Germany intends war against the other. The real reason of the strain is that, to protect her growing trade in the first instance, and later to safeguard her interests in world-politics, Germany has built a powerful fleet, and Britain feels that this fleet is a check and a menace to her. The German fleet is not large enough to be able ever to weaken Britain's naval power, but it is large enough to cause her serious trouble if her intention were taken up with fighting in any other part of the world. I do not, indeed, wonder that the British nation should dislike this, but the British nation in its turn should understand that Germany cannot help herself. The German Empire has practically no colonies. It is true that, in spite of its sixty-five million inhabitants, it has no surplus population, scarcely any emigration (about 25,000 yearly), and, on the other

hand, a very large immigration. Yet it requires colonies, because it has a very large surplus among its upper classes. The excellent educational institutions of Germany are well known: primary and secondary schools, technical colleges and universities. Thousands of foreigners—Russians, Americans, Asiatics—come to study in Germany (this year there are as many as 5,400), and the more intelligent among the lower classes of the nation are continually rising to swell the ranks of the university-educated. Almost thirty per cent. of the students of Berlin University are drawn from the lower classes. *In the last three years* the population of Germany has increased four per cent., while the number of students increases four per cent. *every year*, and it has been calculated that even at the present day Germany has already 10,000 students too many. With these splendidly trained young men Germany would be in a position to govern and to civilise many millions of people of inferior race or of less advanced civilisation, as the British are doing in India, Egypt, South Africa, and the Soudan. But ever since Germany has begun to make active efforts to obtain possessions of this kind it has been our experience that England again and again comes in our way, and is endeavouring, as far as she can, to make the whole world British. Even at this moment England would appear to be working to bring part of Persia and Tibet under her dominion, and further divisions or redistributions are always in prospect. *In order that they may not fare badly* on such occasions in the future, the Germans have been obliged to build their great fleet. This step cannot be retraced. The question now is, what can be done, in spite of the existence of the German fleet, to better the relations between Britain and Germany? Mr. Asquith said recently that the territory

and dominion of England were sufficiently great, and she could not desire to go on increasing her responsibilities. The truth of this statement is obvious. Already 400 millions, *i.e.*, one-quarter of the whole human race, are under British rule. But the course of events is often stronger than human wishes; and it may be that, not because she desires it, but because she cannot help herself, England will bring still further territories under the protection of her flag. But in that case she should remember that the Germans too are a great nation, who have their own claims, and are entitled to have them. The relations between the two countries would at once become less strained if we in Germany could feel assured that Britain was no longer opposing our expansion, but, on the contrary, was furthering it in a spirit of friendship, free of competitive jealousy; in other words, that in any future extension of dominion on the part of England or any other great Power, Germany should not be denied her share. As soon as the Germans see that this principle is recognised in England, the insistence of public opinion that the fleet continue to be further strengthened will relax—an insistence which has been assuming most passionate form since the interference of England in the Franco-German Morocco compromise. And when Germany begins to experience not only the glory which a large colonial empire brings with it, but also the burdens which it entails, she will of her own accord in so far set bounds to her ambition that England will have no further cause for anxiety.

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